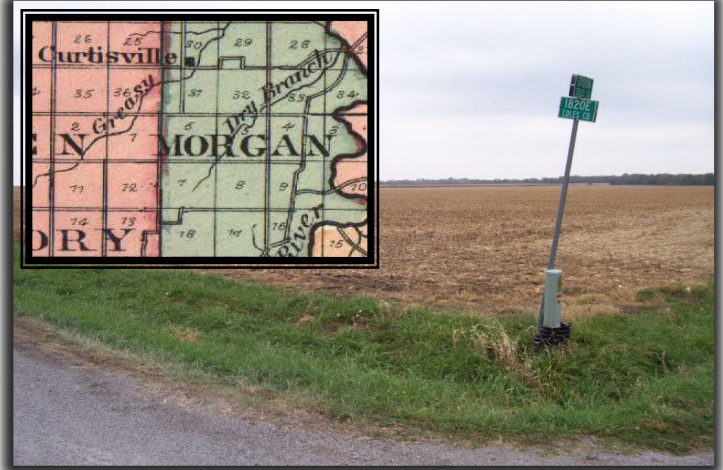


Morgan Township is an oddly shaped tract of land in northeastern Coles County and is home to a number of strange places and past events. The township is around nine miles long, four and a half miles wide at its northernmost border and a mere one and a half miles wide at its southernmost border. The Embarras River valley and timberland lay along its eastern border, and the familiar prairie lay along its western border. The township was named after David Morgan, a pioneer, but was heavily populated by Native Americans before the settlers arrived.

## Curtisville— Yet Another Vanished Town

The *History of Coles County, 1876-1976* tells us that Morgan Township contained some of the first land to be settled on account of a prevalence of good forests and freshwater springs. The first schoolhouse was built in 1839, probably in an area known as "Greasy Point," but its exact location has been lost to history. It was about a mile or so southwest of that point that the first village was attempted in the township: Curtisville, at or near the intersection of 1700N and 1820E. Curtisville originally contained a store owned by a man named Cutler Mitchell and a blacksmith shop as well as, in all probability, a few houses. The village was never officially platted, but it was featured on early maps and possessed a post office in 1867. Aside from an old,

crumbling barn, all traces of this village have disappeared or been plowed under. Only windswept corn and soybean fields remain.



*The former location of Curtisville*



*Greasy Creek as it can be seen today*

## The Grisly Tale of Greasy Creek

One of the township's prominent features is Greasy Creek, a tributary of the Embarras River. It is known by that name because of the conspicuous acts of a few hog thieves. The two men would steal the animals from their neighbors, prepare them alongside the creek, and discard the innards into the water, making it appear greasy.

The *History of Coles County, 1879* names these hog thieves as a father and son, Jesse and William Chastene, who also sold a plot of land containing apple trees to David Morgan and then removed the trees during the night and carried them off to a new claim. In the course of their hog thievery, the Chastenes would sever the





animal's heads to prevent identification (they were earmarked by their owners), then throw them in Greasy Creek along with the innards.

### A Long-Forgotten Murder?

According to the *History of Coles County, 1879*, a number of Indian burial grounds are scattered around Morgan Township, although none have been properly excavated. In 1877 or '78, a man named Henry Curtis dug up a human skull, as well as a few other bones, while

looking for bait worms. The skull possessed a bullet-like hole in the rear. Curtis, who was probably shocked, quickly reburied the skeleton and covered the site with rocks. It was never determined who the skeleton belonged to— either native or settler.

### Union and Knoch-Golladay Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries of interest in Morgan Township. The first, Union Cemetery, rests at the edge of the timberland, across the road from the former location of the Union-Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Aside from an antique outhouse, this cemetery boasts some impressive cemetery art for the area. Visitors familiar with the St. Omer story (Issue 3) are probably surprised to discover an identical monument to the one the Barnes' are buried under, dispelling any notion of its uniqueness. As if to preempt any similar rumors, an inscription on this particular monument reads: "he died as he lived – a Christian."



*Seeing double? This headstone is the same design as the famous "witch's grave" in St. Omer Cemetery*



Knoch-Golladay Cemetery is accessed by way of a winding, rugged road. It rests at the top of a ridge a stone-throw from the Embarras River. Some of the oldest graves in the county are located here, but the most interesting one is more recent.

A lone headstone belonging to Emma Knoch sits at the extreme right-hand side of the cemetery. Just before she died of an illness in 1952, Emma dug her own grave about a foot deep so that it was certain where she would be buried. The reason: she wanted to greet cemetery visitors from the afterlife.